Chapter X

Operation Allied Force as a Catalyst for Change: Towards Intensified Multinational Cooperation

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Following the end of the bipolar power competition between East and West in 1991, European militaries, including their air forces, underwent a significant process of transformation characterized by two major trends – concentration and transnationalization.[1] These trends resulted in the creation of smaller, but also more professional and specialized air forces, which started cooperating at an international level to a much larger extent.[2] As a result, they have become more interconnected but also more interdependent than they were during the Cold War. Another trait characteristic of the post-Cold War period has been the increased number of multinational operations European air forces have been involved in as a logical result of concentration and transnationalization. Concentrated air forces became increasingly more reliant on supplementing their available capabilities through cooperation with allies. This is one of the reasons why multinational operations have become the dominant form of military intervention undertaken by European countries. Operation Allied Force (OAF) conducted in Kosovo in 1999, which was NATO's first major military operation, is one example of this type of force application. It also serves as a good illustration of the challenges multinational operations present to participating air forces.

This chapter seeks to uncover the challenges that arose from the multinational nature of OAF and how they affected the cooperation of the NATO countries involved, as well as the effectiveness of the operation. It will show that the experience of multinational operations in OAF set into motion the development of various forms of multinational cooperation within European NATO members and the alliance as a whole, further increasing the

transnationalization of European air forces. Investigating the major difficulties and lessons learnt from this operation, this chapter particularly highlights the issue of national caveats and the capability gap between the US Air Force (USAF) and the rest of the alliance evident in equipment shortages and interoperability problems.

The chapter starts with a brief discussion of OAF and its significance to provide the necessary background for investigating the challenges it presented. Secondly, it looks closer at the concepts of military concentration and transnationalization as factors leading to enhanced multinational cooperation. The main part of the chapter will discuss the major challenges encountered in OAF. Finally, it will look at how they were addressed at the time of the operation and how they affected the further transnationalization of European air forces.

Operation Allied Force

OAF started on 24 March 1999 following the unsuccessful talks in Rambouillet (France) between Serbian leaders and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).[3] The operation's objective was to stop the genocide committed by the forces of Yugoslavian President, Slobodan Milosevic against the citizens of the Kosovo province.[4] OAF's approach was characterized by the intention to gradually extend the range of targets during three phases in order to achieve its stated objectives and to coerce Milosevic to capitulate.[5] Following 78 days and 38,004 sorties flown, the operation finished on 10 June 1999 after Milosevic's capitulation and agreement to withdraw Serbian forces from Kosovo.[6]

All of the then-19 NATO countries officially supported the intervention, but they contributed to the operation to a very different extent.[7] For example, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Luxembourg and Poland did not provide any aircraft or combat forces. Their input was minimal since only Greece and Hungary contributed to the military effort with basing locations and the right to fly over their territories.[8] The most sizeable contributions to OAF were made by the US, France, the UK, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany. Their parts in the operation involved flying approximately 29,000 (the US), 2,414

(France), 1,950 (the UK), 1,252 (the Netherlands), 1,081 (Italy) and 636 (Germany) sorties.[9] The three largest aircraft contributors were the US, France and the UK with the Americans providing over 700 aircraft out of the total 1,055 deployed by the alliance.[10] Furthermore, the US, France and the UK were also the only alliance members who contributed precision guided munitions (PGMs).[11]

The extent to which OAF was an unambiguous airpower success, or was won by airpower alone, has been widely debated.[12] On the one hand, the operation clearly succeeded inasmuch as it achieved its objectives and coerced Milosevic to withdraw from Kosovo. On the other hand, as General Wesley Clark pointed out, "though NATO had succeeded in its first armed conflict, it didn't feel like a victory".[13] What he meant was that it was not entirely clear if it was solely the air operation that caused Milosevic to capitulate.[14] Whatever the rights or wrongs of this debate, OAF was certainly a significant operation for two reasons.

Firstly, it justified the alliance's continuing existence which was questioned after the Soviet Union – the opponent NATO was created to defend against in the first place – had ceased to exist. OAF was NATO's first major military operation and, as such marked its transformation from a predominantly defensive organization into one getting involved in offensive activities.[15] Secondly, as will be demonstrated further in the chapter, OAF revealed significant challenges to cooperation within the alliance, which determined the future course for development of various multinational initiatives enhancing NATO's collective capability and capacity. These challenges can be grouped into two main categories: national caveats affecting, for example, the decision-making process, and a significant capability gap between the US and the rest of the alliance evident in interoperability issues between participating air forces and the systems they used. These challenges were to be expected in a large multinational operation. However, because it was NATO's first major military intervention, which moreover took place while many of the participating air forces were still undergoing

structural and organizational changes, it made clear which areas needed to be addressed to improve the effectiveness of future operations. Therefore, as this chapter shows, OAF initiated the further transnationalization of NATO air forces, especially in Europe.

Post-Cold War transnationalization of the air forces and its consequences

The end of the Cold War bi-polar order initiated a military transformation of NATO and some former Warsaw Pact air forces effecting their growing engagement in multinational operations. This process took the form of concentration and transnationalization, leading to a change in the quantity and quality of the affected forces. At this point it is vital to mention that both processes affected predominantly the European air forces. The USAF, although it also underwent certain changes, retained its full-spectrum of capabilities.

The concentration of European air forces was a logical consequence of the end of the Cold War, which at the time seemed to designate the threat of large-scale, conventional conflict in Europe as a relic of the past. With a dramatically changed security environment, many European states stopped prioritizing large-scale conventional military capabilities, decreased their military expenditure, and started the process of reducing existing forces.[16] For example, in the UK, that process was initiated with two defense reviews published by the Conservative Government, namely *Options for Change* from 1990–1991 and *Front Line First* from 1994 addressing predominantly the reduction of defence budgets. The table below illustrates the reduction in personnel in the Air Forces of the six aforementioned major contributors to the OAF.

Table 1. Total air forces personnel for major OAF contributors in 1990 and 1999.

Country	Personnel in 1990	Personnel in 1999
the US	571,000	361,400
France	93,100	76,400

Country	Personnel in 1990	Personnel in 1999
Germany[17]	106,000	76,400
Italy	79,600	61,900
the Netherlands	17,400	11,980
the UK	89,600	55,200

Source: "NATO and Non-NATO Europe," *The Military Balance* 99, no. 1 (1999): 30–103; "The Alliances and Europe," *The Military Balance* 90, no. 1 (1990): 44–96; "United States," *The Military Balance* 99, no. 1 (1999): 12–29; "United States," *The Military Balance* 90, no. 1 (1990): 12–27.

However, military concentration did not merely mean a decrease in the size of military forces. Its ultimate goal was the creation of compact and specialized professional units that seemed more relevant to the new security environment.[18] Another characteristic of that process was the contractorization of the militaries, which involved outsourcing certain services to the private sector rather than having them delivered by the military or the civil service.[19] In the UK the move was initiated in the 1980s and is still being continued until the present day involving a whole array of activities ranging from office support to supporting expeditionary military operations, for example in Afghanistan.[20] Therefore, it should not be viewed solely as a decline. Because of the transformation they had fewer resources and personnel but, as Anthony King argued, the transformed armed forces that emerged were also "qualitatively different" from their pre-1990 counterparts since they benefitted from targeted investment in specific prioritized areas.[21] As a result, armed forces that had focused on mass and in many cases were maintained through universal conscription, evolved into smaller, professional and more specialized forces. These were better suited to operations at the lower end of the conflict spectrum, such as, for example, peacekeeping, peace support or

humanitarian interventions requiring deeper cooperation between military and civilian sectors than the "traditionally" perceived military functions.[22]

Unfortunately for the European air forces military concentration, although leading to the creation of specialized and more effective units, did not allow for building or maintaining a full spectrum of air power capabilities. Certainly, no European air force could compete with the USAF as the most powerful air force in the world. Therefore, with the budgetary cuts, reorganization and personnel reduction, investment in one capability was often made at the expense of another. A logical solution to this problem was increased cooperation among European air forces, which allowed individual states to make up for shortcomings in certain areas and maintaining military capability. Such multinational engagement ultimately led to increasing interoperability, but also interdependence resulting in, what King called military transnationalization.[23]

Multinational military cooperation as such, of course, was not a new phenomenon in the post-Cold war period. States have cooperated in the military sphere and worked in ad-hoc coalitions for centuries. Nevertheless, from 1991 onwards, cooperation started taking place more frequently across the whole military structure, not only at the strategic level but also operational and tactical, leading to the creation of truly multinational forces within coalitions. As such, it also uncovered previously unknown challenges and difficulties, potentially disrupting the smooth running of missions and affecting the effectiveness of operations.

Challenges Faced in Operation Allied Force

Multinational operations are complex undertakings. They involve forces from different nations coming from different cultural backgrounds, representing different approaches and bringing their own, not always compatible, equipment, procedures and regulations to the coalition. OAF was NATO's first major military intervention conducted in a changing security environment. As such, it faced significant challenges arising from multinational cooperation, as a result of national caveats and a capability gap in particular.

National caveats

According to NATO's definition national caveats are "any limitation, restriction or constraint imposed by a nation on its military forces or civilian elements under NATO command and control or otherwise available to NATO, that does not permit NATO commanders to deploy and employ these assets fully in line with the approved operation plan."[24] The imposition of national caveats by individual states is the norm in multinational operations for various reasons. First and foremost, they are imposed as a means of control over deployed national forces in order to minimize the costs and risks they will be exposed to.[25] Secondly, caveats often reflect specific domestic political considerations of nations involved in a coalition and multinational operations. As such, national caveats might represent, for example, a compromise between political parties with different views on the country's involvement in a particular operation or a way to ensure that the activities performed by the deployed forces will not damage national interests or the country's or its leaders' image, both domestically and internationally, through negative publicity.[26] Following from the last point, national caveats may be imposed according to what foreign policy behavior is considered appropriate or desirable by individual states in various conditions. Therefore, national caveats are also often linked to a nation's cultural and historical background – the values and perceptions shared by society as a whole.[27]

As Anthony Cordesman pointed out, political constraints as a result of national caveats, rather than capability shortcomings, were "the most serious single problem" in the conduct of OAF.[28] The restraints posed by national caveats on the effectiveness of missions was visible in the process of decision-making especially pertaining to the approval of targets. However, it was also reflected in the attitude which the involved countries presented towards the air strikes and military intervention in general as opposed to the option to solve the conflict by diplomatic means.

In the run-up to OAF, there was a noticeable trend for alliance members that were geographically closest to the area of operations to be the most reluctant about a military solution to the conflict, the escalation of air strikes once the operations had started, and the option of deploying ground troops.[29] For example, the states most determined to find a non-military solution to the conflict were Italy and Greece. Considering that these countries are direct neighbors of Yugoslavia, such a stance should not have come as a surprise. Both countries, in the case of a military intervention, would be the first to be affected by its effects such as, for example, large number of refugees seeking shelter from the conflict.[30] The stance represented by Italy and Greece was an explicit example of their leaderships' efforts to protect their national interest, in this case, to maintain regional stability, while avoiding at the same time political marginalization and remaining viable members of NATO.[31] Ultimately, both Italy and Greece supported the operation, but also continued pushing for a peaceful solution and restraint, even once the air strikes had commenced. The Italian government continued its efforts to re-start the negotiations in order to resolve the conflict through diplomatic means, and the Greek leadership succeeded in convincing Milosevic to put forward a cease-fire offer for the duration of the Orthodox Easter. The latter, however, was rejected as not reliable by the coalition and the air strikes did not stop.[32] The stance of the Italian government presents a particularly interesting case considering that, after all, Italy in practice was one of the major contributors of personnel and aircraft to the operation.

Germany's motivation for supporting the operation was the wish to strengthen the country's position in the international arena. The desire to improve its international image by standing firm against genocide and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo was influenced by the country's past and the atrocities committed in its name during the Second World War.[33] At the same time, precisely because of its military past, Germany shared Italy's and Greece's

determination to resolve the conflict by diplomatic means and to minimize the use of lethal force, decisively standing against escalation and the introduction of ground forces.[34]

A contrasting approach and attitude towards intervention in Kosovo was taken by the UK, which was by far more assertive, or "hawkish", as Olivier Schmitt called it.[35] To strengthen their position within the alliance and their relationship with the US, the UK was not only firmly lobbying for a military intervention to coerce Milosevic into stopping the atrocities, but it was also one of the few NATO members that insisted on not ruling out the ground option. This stance was very much in line with the UK's 1998 *Strategic Defence Review*, which set the direction for transforming the British Armed Forces into highly-deployable expeditionary units able to respond to a series of new threats and forms of conflict, including humanitarian interventions.[36] It was also concurrent with Tony Blair's 'Doctrine of the International Community' in which he advocated for the need of multinational cooperation and international response to the arising crises in the Balkan region.[37]

National interest also dictated the support of OAF by some smaller countries, especially the newest members of NATO, namely the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. In spite of their minimal practical contribution, expressing support for the operation was extremely important for them, because it was an opportunity to demonstrate that they were a useful and committed member of the alliance, as well as a valuable ally of the US.[38] As such, it is clear that national interests and domestic politics played a major role in shaping the way in which individual NATO members approached the operation.

Once OAF had commenced, some countries' reluctance vis-à-vis their engagement in a fully-fledged air campaign was also mirrored in the process of target selection. As pointed out by General Wesley Clark, in contrast to the US, European members of the alliance on the whole were less willing to strike strategically sensitive targets like, for example,

communication lines, bridges, radio and television stations or the power grid, in order to avoid antagonizing the Serbian population and causing excessive destruction in the country.[39] Such an approach was especially represented by the French who, out of all 19 NATO members, most often used their right to veto air strikes against critical infrastructure in Serbia as well as targets located in Montenegro.[40] Lack of unanimous decision on target approval certainly caused a lot of friction in the alliance. It had the potential for serious consequences, for example, by endangering allied forces as a result of the inability to destroy surface-to-air missiles in Montenegro, because of repetitive French vetoes.[41]

The process of target authorization was further complicated by the presence of parallel command structures in OAF. Alongside the NATO chain of command there were national chains of command, which complicated decision making. For example, after a target was approved by General Clark at the Supreme Allied Command Europe, it also had to go through a similar review in all participating states.[42] This procedure not only complicated target approval, but also caused confusion with regards to command and control and responsibility for performing a particular task.[43] There was another downside of parallel decision-making. As General Clark noted, the prolonged process of target approval often involved the public discussion of potential targets, thereby making them known to Serbian forces, which obviously hampered the effectiveness of air strikes.[44]

Although potentially destructive for the alliance and certainly frustrating for the participating forces, friction resulting from national caveats did not ultimately destroy coalition coherence and unity during OAF. As the operation progressed, the alliance learned from the process and set out to implement lessons identified immediately. For example, by the end of the first week of the operation the US, the UK, France, Germany and Italy agreed on a list of points to be used as a guidance for the US on target authorization which, once followed, would prevent the European allies from using their veto.[45] As a compromise,

targets in Montenegro were excluded unless they posed a direct threat to allied forces. Any targets within five nautical miles of Belgrade required approval, as did air strikes that could incur significant civilian casualties or that targeted the power grid.[46] Although this guidance was only prepared and agreed on after OAF had started, it was able to take into account the participating states' major national caveats and limited friction within the alliance regarding target authorization.

Nevertheless, the introduced guidelines did not completely prevent collateral damage as the allies wished. As reported, OAF included over 30 cases of unintended damage due to identification and targeting errors out of which twelve involved civilian casualties.[47] The latter ones were widely publicized in media and had an enormous effect on the conduct of the operation. The targeting mistakes included, for example, confusing civilian vehicles containing refugees for a military convoy on the road between Djakovica and Decane in south-east Kosovo, accidentally bombing a bridge in southern Serbia while a passenger train was crossing it or bombing Chinese embassy in Belgrade as a result of mistaking it for a building of military purposes.[48] The latter one probably had the most adverse effect on the conduct of the operation as it not only led to stopping any bombings in Belgrade for two weeks but also caused a diplomatic crisis between the US and China.[49] In general, these targeting errors had a two-fold effect. Firstly, they directly influenced the introduction of very strict rules of engagement as discussed above. Secondly, they contributed to the unrealistic expectations set for the operation. As Benjamin Lambeth pointed out, the approach of zero casualties and no unintended damage to non-military infrastructure was adopted as almost a measure of the success of OAF and hence air power - the perceived perfectly precise tool, underwent a stringent judgement under unrealistic standards.[50]

Capability gap between the US and European Allies

The operation in Kosovo revealed a significant capability gap between the USAF and the air forces of European NATO members. This was especially visible in such areas as

PGMs and command, control and communications systems, but also in air transport and air-to-air refueling capabilities.

As a result of military concentration, European air forces had significantly reduced in size, which had further increased the capability gap with the US. The below table illustrates the number of active personnel and aircraft of the US and European NATO members in 1999.

Table 2. NATO air forces personnel and inventory strength in 1999.

Country	Active personnel	Total number of aircraft
Belgium	11,500	221
Czech Republic	15,400	291
Denmark	4,700	110
France	76,400	984
Germany	76,400	837
Greece	30,170	611
Hungary	11,500	344
Iceland	_____	_____
Italy	61,900	633
Luxembourg	_____	_____
The Netherlands	11,980	304
Norway	6,700	142
Poland	55,300	650
Portugal	7,445	150
Spain	29,100	558
Turkey	63,000	775
The UK	55,200	1,023

Country	Active personnel	Total number of aircraft
European allies total	**516,695**	**7,633**
The US	361,400	6,178

Source: "NATO and Non-NATO Europe," 30–103; "United States," 12–29.

The table shows that, at the time of OAF, the USAF had approximately 70% of the personnel and 81% of the aircraft inventory when compared to the resources possessed collectively by the European NATO members. As such it vividly illustrates the mentioned capability and capacity gap. The numbers given for the European air forces include a large variety of different types of aircraft that vastly differed in quality. For example, they include several different types and generations of combat aircraft and helicopters that were not always compatible such as, for example, Soviet Su-22s or MiG-29s on one hand and F-16s or different versions of Tornado aircraft on the other.[51] At the same time, the number of available transport or reconnaissance aircraft was low and only a few European air forces had any refueling capability, not even to mention PGMs.[52] The type and quality of platforms and their compatibility are more important than quantity, because they affect the effectiveness of an operation, especially when it is conducted in a multilateral setting. Add to this the differences in doctrine, training and procedures and it is easy to see that European NATO air forces, even with an impressive quantity of personnel and equipment, did not amount to a joint "European Air Force" with full spectrum capabilities.

In OAF, the US contributed the vast majority of material resources. The USAF, as already mentioned, provided over 700 out of 1,055 aircraft and 23,315 – 83% - of all munitions used in the operation, both precision and non-precision.[53] The largest contributors of aircraft from among the European air forces were France with approximately 100 aircraft, the UK and Italy.[54] However, the contribution of the other European allies should not be

diminished who, in addition to some aircraft, provided crucial basing facilities for American assets. In total the non-US allies flew approximately 40% of the missions.[55] Some European allies proved extremely valuable in specific mission areas, making up for other shortcomings. For example, Germany and Italy could not contribute with PGMs since they did not possess such capability, but they excelled in the suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD).[56]

One of the major shortcomings revealed during OAF was the limited access to PGMs. Considering the aforementioned concerns expressed by some of the coalition members about offensive operations and minimizing the number of casualties, use of that type of munitions would be crucial to meeting those objectives. However, during the operation PGMs constituted 35% of all the weapons used, but only three of the participating states (US and to a lesser extent France and the UK) were able to deliver them, which placed a strain on the USAF.[57] Moreover, after the operation had commenced, it became evident that many of the deployed European fighter aircraft presented very little operational usefulness as they could not conduct strikes with PGMs, and rarely were able to operate in all-weather or night conditions.[58] These disparities only stressed the size of the capability gap between the US and the rest of the alliance.

Another area which revealed a significant limitation of European air forces' capabilities was air-to-air refueling (AAR). Again, most of the tanker aircraft (over 170) were provided by the US while the European allies deployed only 13.[59] Considering that 21% of all sorties performed in OAF were AAR-related, the number of specialized aircraft contributed by European air forces seemed almost insignificant. Furthermore, the cooperation in the AAR area was also disrupted by the interoperability issues between the UK tankers and some of the US aircraft. Undoubtedly, the RAF provided a significant share of AAR in OAF as illustrated by the fact that 85% of the fuel the British tankers supplied was received by non-British aircraft.[60] The UK was also the sole NATO member which had the Joint Tactical Information

Distribution System installed in their tanker aircraft and therefore proved to be one of the most interoperable AAR fleet in the operation.[61] Nevertheless, refueling turned out to be problematic between the British and American aircraft. According to Air Vice Marshal Steve Nicholl, the RAF was able to refuel the US Navy and the US Marine Corps aircraft but was not compatible with the USAF platforms except for the F-16s which are widely sold among other nations and therefore present fewer interoperability problems.[62] Considering that the US provided the largest number of aircraft to the operation and the UK was one of the major AAR providers that situation presented a serious interoperability issue.

Similar limitations were present in the area of airlift, electronic warfare assets used in support of SEAD and delivered mostly by the US, as well as reconnaissance, especially the lack of a system for intelligence gathering and processing independent from that operated by the US.[63] The shortcomings in the area of strategic airlift were partially mitigated by the UK, for example, through the use of commercial assets.[64] Nevertheless, following the end of the operation, that particular capability was identified by European allies as one of the most urgent limitations of European air power.

The capability gap in providing reconnaissance was partially filled by the deployment of US and European unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to the operation, which provided the allied forces with precise, real-time, reconnaissance and surveillance information. UAVs were also used in the process of target approval, cross-checking the information on potential targets gathered by the alliance's pilots.[65] Out of the European contributors, both France and Germany deployed UAVs to OAF, which performed 37% of the unmanned sorties. However, these could fly only very short distances and, therefore, the amount of reconnaissance data they could gather was significantly reduced.[66] Nevertheless, the introduction of unmanned platforms to OAF significantly improved the quality of reconnaissance missions performed. However, the lack of an intelligence gathering and processing system that was independent

from the US, presented a significant problem for the European allies. Since they did not possess such capability, they were completely reliant on the information supplied by the US. After OAF concluded, several European nations such as France, Germany and Italy, undertook steps to improve that particular capability by expanding their UAV fleets and cooperating on military communications satellites programmes (France and Germany).[67]

The capability gap revealed during OAF was not only a matter of differences in available technology, but also became visible in serious interoperability issues. When OAF was launched in 1999, NATO as an alliance, with the exception of the three Central European members that had joined recently, already had five decades of experience in joint training and cooperation towards greater standardization and interoperability. For example, in preparation for a conflict with the Warsaw Pact, the allied forces trained together on annual basis in an exercise Reforger aimed at building NATO's ability to deploy their forces to West Germany.[68] Moreover, some of NATO members' air forces also regularly took part in the Red Flag exercise organized by the USAF.[69] Therefore, one might have expected that the integration of forces in OAF would run seamlessly. In the event it became clear that experience in peacetime training and joint exercises did not easily translate into the smooth conduct of an actual military operation. The most serious interoperability issue uncovered in OAF was related to communications capability. The problem was two-fold: firstly, there was no common communication and information exchange network that could be used by the US and NATO, and secondly, the existing systems used by individual allies were not compatible.[70] This not only affected the smooth and timely exchange of information, but also the security of data transmission. This particular shortcoming hampered cooperation at all levels – from strategic through operational to tactical. The existing secure systems were often not suited to sending large amounts of data and got easily overloaded. For example, NATO's Limited Operational Capability for Europe system, which was used in OAF for forwarding

air tasking orders, could only send a very limited amount of data.[71] The lack of secure channels, like telephone lines and radio frequencies, in addition to the limited capacity of the existing systems, forced the participating air forces to use non-encrypted channels to forward sensitive information. This increased the possibility of interception by Serbian forces. The other option was to deliver sensitive information in writing for the rest of the allies to enter manually into their national systems and databases, unnecessarily prolonging the delivery and processing of information.[72] Both solutions significantly reduced the effectiveness of the operation, especially in relation to mobile targets which, by the time the information was processed and air strike launched, could be in a completely different location.

Cooperation in OAF was disrupted by national caveats as well as a significant capability gap between the USAF and European NATO members, which was reflected in the lack of crucial equipment and non-interoperability and non-compatibility of the existing national systems. These major limitations served as a catalyst for developing efforts aimed at overcoming them, once OAF had been completed.

Setting the course for improving the transnationalization of European air forces

OAF, as NATO's first major military intervention, set the course for addressing issues that had resulted from the transnationalization of European air forces and ensuring their compatibility. The issue that raised the biggest concerns after OAF was the aforementioned capability gap between the USAF and the rest of NATO. It was identified as the most urgent problem to deal with and hence, the development of the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) was prioritized immediately.[73]

DCI was approved at the Washington summit in April 1999 and aimed at bridging the capability gap between NATO members and improving their interoperability.[74] This objective was to be achieved through focusing on areas such as deployability, mobility, sustainability and survivability of allied forces, as well as logistics, effective management and command and control.[75] Focusing on the abovementioned military capabilities, DCI

identified 58 goals towards upgrading these areas. Some goals, like training, increased cooperation and coordination between allies, were considered relatively quick to implement and cost-effective. Others, like modernization of existing equipment, required greater investment of time and money.[76]A High Level Steering Group (HLSG) was created at the summit and put in charge of overseeing the implementation of the Initiative. One of the substantial improvements leading towards achieving DCI's objectives and recognized by the HLSG was the introduction of the concept of a Multinational Joint Logistics Centre, aimed at the creation of an integrated allied system for theatre logistics.[77]

OAF made it unambiguously clear that some of the areas identified in the DCI needed to be prioritized in order to work towards closing the capability gap between the US and Europe. Initially, all of the set objectives had equal priority. However, after OAF had concluded it became clear that two of them were more urgent for the European allies – forces' deployability and sustainability and agreement on common goals in defense expenditure.[78]

The initiative presented promising opportunities for the improvement of cooperation within NATO as an alliance. All of the allied states understood DCI was a long-term commitment. However, in spite of this common understanding they had quite different perceptions of how it should be conducted. For example, because of its focus on the concept of the Revolution in Military Affairs and the promotion of advanced equipment, the initiative was criticized as being affordable only for the more powerful members of NATO such as, for example, the UK, France or Germany leaving out the smaller, less wealthy states.[79] Those smaller states, especially the new Central and Eastern European members, perceived DCI as a long-term goal that should be implemented after their militaries had adapted to match the standards set by NATO.[80] The perceptions of DCI represented by the larger European NATO countries also varied. For example, Germany had a very selective approach to the set goals

and was interested in working towards only a few of them, namely strategic airlift, command and control and intelligence. In contrast, the UK and France considered the initiative's objectives as confirmation of the course of military restructuration and modernization they had adopted.[81] The US in turn, perceived it as a solution to upgrade the European armed forces and to close the capability gap.[82] Those differing perceptions and the imposition of national caveats interrupted multinational cooperation and, as a result, affected the success of the initiative. Certainly, DCI correctly identified areas that needed work to bridge the gap between the US and European militaries. Nevertheless, it did not contribute significantly to the development of the necessary capabilities.[83] National caveats about the utility of military force and the kind of armed forces required by the individual European NATO members were therefore an obstacle in the successful implementation of the DCI.

When OAF had been completed, the allied air forces commenced some efforts to address the revealed technological gap. Those countries that could afford it started to build their own high-tech systems. For example, to address the PGMs shortage, France was developing the Advanced Air-to-Surface Missile.[84] The majority of allies, aware of budgetary constraints, however, opted to address the capability gap by intensifying their participation in various cooperative initiatives and programs in order to pursue the goals set by the DCI. For example, after OAF, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey and the UK agreed on the procurement of the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) to make up for the PGMs shortcoming.[85] JDAM is a kit that facilitates the conversion of non-guided munitions into PGMs and, since it uses the Global Positioning System (GPS), also upgrades them with all-weather capability.[86] As such it offered a much cheaper option of acquiring PGM capability using already existing resources, rather than developing entirely new technology from scratch.

A priority area in improving the cohesion and integration of NATO air forces was to ensure the unification of policies and procedures, especially in the area of C4 – command, control, communications and computers.[87] Viewed as equally important for future operations were unified tactics, agreement on the military or diplomatic means used to resolve the particular conflict and the perception of strategic objectives which all should be clearly set out in allied publications. Hence, the importance of continuing to write allied joint publications (AJP) and establishing a common NATO doctrine was also stressed.[88] Setting overarching standards for all NATO members was quite perceived rightly as the way to ensure interoperability and minimize friction among participants in any future operation.

Finally, as pointed out in the Department of Defense's report to the US Congress, "operation Allied Force also validated the need for joint, integrated training among the Services to enhance their ability to execute both, joint and coalition air operations."[89] While this statement referred to the US armed forces specifically, it may be perceived as a general lesson from OAF applicable for all NATO member states and their air forces. Coalition building requires interoperability among its members and that comes, firstly, from standardized procedures, and secondly, from experience of working together.

The above section discussed how the experience from OAF stressed the importance of solid multinational cooperation among the allied air forces and shaped the development of different initiatives to build collective military capability and capacity. The cooperative multinational initiatives pursued under DCI were important for European air forces, especially for the smaller ones. Many European states could not afford to buy significant amounts of new equipment or, what would have been even more expensive, to develop their own systems to make up for existing limitations and build a fully capable air force. The majority therefore resorted to various multinational initiatives based on the idea of pooling

and sharing resources which offer a (cost-)effective way of accessing necessary equipment and boosting operational capability.[90]

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the challenges encountered by NATO air forces in Operation Allied Force in Kosovo within the framework of acting in a multinational operation. Identifying the main problems pertaining to cooperation in OAF as national caveats and the capability gap between the US and the rest of the alliance, it argued that lessons identified during the operation set the course for further transnationalization of European air forces.

Undoubtedly, OAF could be perceived as a milestone in the history of NATO's multinational operations. Firstly, it validated the very existence of the Alliance and set a course for its future engagements. Not only was Allied Force the first major military operation conducted by NATO, but it was carried out in the new, post-Cold War security environment in which the alliance's prime opponent, and the very reason for its establishment, ceased to exist. The operation and its outcome did not live up to the overly optimistic initial hopes of some that it could be concluded within days, but did prove that the alliance was still an important organization with much potential to be used in resolving conflicts and in answering crises arising in the challenging post-1990 reality.

Secondly, OAF highlighted the serious challenges that multinational cooperation may bring. A lack of compatible equipment and standardized procedures, parallel command structures and over-reliance on US resources disrupted the conduct of the operation and highlighted the urgency for improving interoperability within the alliance. However, the operation in Kosovo not only identified areas of serious capability and capacity limitations, especially among the European allies, but also made it clear that in its current shape, NATO, not to mention its individual members, would not be able to oppose a peer competitor. The situation in Kosovo was characterized by asymmetry on the sides of the conflict where the

alliance, despite all of the problematic issues, had an undeniable advantage over Milosevic's forces. In a conflict with a more equal opponent that capability gap, together with interoperability issues and overly restraining national caveats, could have had a significantly more adverse effect on the operation. Therefore, it can be asserted that the drive towards multinational cooperation and to addressing these challenges has re-gained particular importance recently, when the threat of state-on-state conflict has again been elevated to the political agenda as a result of the rise of China and Russia.[91]

The process of military transformation taking place among the armed forces and shrinking defense budgets ensured that multinationality became the dominant form of post-Cold War military interventions and the issues identified during OAF needed to be addressed for cooperation to be effective. Increased multinational cooperation in the form of DCI was prioritized as a solution. The DCI initiative was developed into another related effort, Smart Defence, however the objectives remained unchanged – to build a collective military capability and, at the same time, to provide NATO members with a cost-effective way to access required capabilities and gain the necessary experience in using them. In spite of the efforts since OAF, the capability gap between the USAF and European air forces had not been resolved more than a decade later as demonstrated by Operation Unified Protector in Libya in 2011 (see chapter twelve).[92]

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